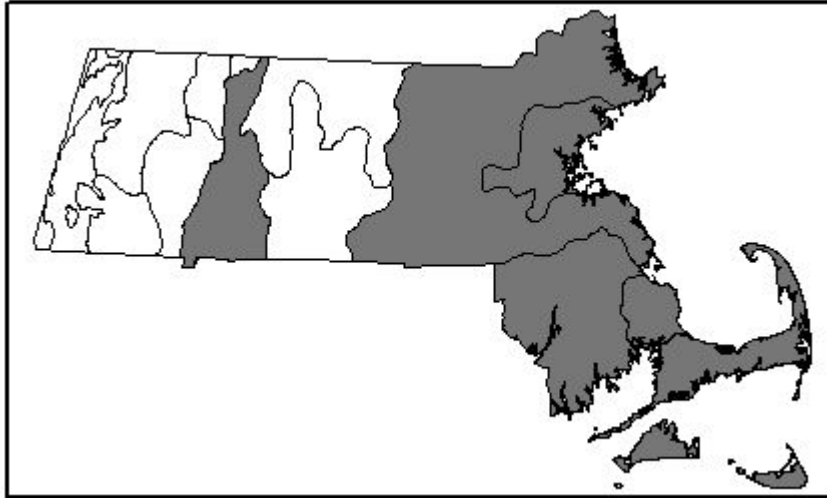


Community Name: SANDPLAIN HEATHLAND

Community Code: CT2B2B0000

SRANK: S1



Concept: An open, dwarf shrub dominated, primarily coastal community, sharing many species with Sandplain Grasslands. Heathlands often have sparse clumps of plants with bare soil or lichen cover between the vascular plants.

Environmental Setting: Heathlands occur on acidic, nutrient poor, droughty soils. Sandplain heathlands grade into Sandplain Grasslands, and both grade into other coastal communities such as Maritime Shrublands, Scrub Oak Shrublands, and Pitch Pine/Scrub Oak Communities, where they often occur in openings. Natural occurrences were likely maintained by fire and / or salt spray.

Vegetation Description: Many of the dominant species in heathlands are woody: scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), and lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*). Other characteristic species include hairgrass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), little blue stem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), stiff aster (*Ionactis linariifolius*, formerly *Aster linariifolius*), bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), golden heather (*Hudsonia ericoides*), chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), dwarf chinquapin oak (*Q. prinoides*), and sweetfern (*Comptonia peregrina*). Heathlands are less species rich than grasslands and appear taller. The tall shrublands association particularly includes non-ericaceous tall shrubs such as beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), beach plum (*Prunus maritima*), and dewberry (*Rubus flagellaris*). The species overlap with grasslands is great: it is the proportion of the species and the resultant structure that separates the communities. The communities are not distinct at some sites.

Associations: Dunwiddie et al. 1996 recognized two large heathland associations: Tall shrub, which subdivides into Mixed Maritime Shrubland and Huckleberry - Scrub Oak Heathlands, and Low shrub, which divides into Broom Crowberry Heathlands and Bearberry Heathlands. A somewhat depauperate type of heathland developed on dredge spoils found along the Cape Cod Canal, and could be considered a cultural subtype of heathland community.

Habitat Values for Associated Fauna: Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), Savannah Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), and Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*) use sandplain heathlands. Northern harriers (*Circus cyaneus*) nest in heathlands or nearby shrublands and hunt in grasslands and open heathlands. Meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), short-tailed shrews (*Blarina brevicauda*), and white-footed mice (*Peromyscus leucopus*) are often abundant near or under the shrubs. White-footed mice are known to be hosts of the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) that carries Lyme Disease. Other invertebrates of Heathlands includes butterflies such as Hairstreaks and Skippers.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Associated Rare Plants:

AMELANCHIER NANTUCKETENSIS	NANTUCKET SHADBUSH	SC
CIRSIIUM HORRIDULUM	YELLOW THISTLE	- WL
COREMA CONRADII	BROOM CROWBERRY	SC
DICHANTHELIUM COMMONSIANUM	COMMONS'S PANIC-GRASS	SC
HYPERICUM HYPERICOIDES SSP	ST. ANDREW'S CROSS	E
LECHEA MINOR	THYME-LEAF PINWEED	- WL
LIATRIS SCARIOSUS VAR NOVAE-ANGLIAE	NEW ENGLAND BLAZING STAR	SC
LUPINUS PERENNIS	WILD LUPINE	- WL
PRENANTHES SERPENTARIA	LION'S FOOT	E
QUERCUS STELLATA	POST OAK	- WL

Associated Rare Animals:

ABAGROTIS CRUMBI BENJAMINI	COASTAL HEATHLAND CUTWORM	SC
ASIO FLAMMEUS	SHORT-EARED OWL	E
CICINDELA PURPUREA	PURPLE TIGER BEETLE	SC
CINGILIA CATENARIA	CHAIN DOT GEOMETER	SC
CIRCUS CYANEUS	NORTHERN HARRIER	T
HEMILEUCA MAIA	COASTAL BARRENS BUCKMOTH	T
HEMARIS GRACILIS	SLENDER CLEARWING SPHINX MOTHS	SC
NICROPHORUS AMERICANUS	AMERICAN BURYING BEETLE	E

Examples with Public Access: Wasque and Long Point - Martha's Vineyard; Middle Moors, Head of the Plains - Nantucket; Marconi - Cape Cod National Seashore, Wellfleet.

Threats: fire suppression, some exotic species such as black pine (*Pinus thunbergiana*) and Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). Fragmentation, vehicular traffic, and development. Domestic pets and feral predators are problems for ground nesting bird species, such as Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*).

Management Needs: Fire management plans should be produced and implemented to reintroduce fire, as prescribed fire, to the best examples. Remove exotics where a problem. Control foot and vehicle traffic.

Synonyms

USNVC/TNC: Includes: Hudsonia tomentosa Dwarf-Shrubland Alliance -- Hudsonia tomentosa - Arctostaphylos uva-ursi Dwarf - Shrubland [CEGL006143] [also in coastal dune community]; Vaccinium (angustifolium, myrtilloides, pallidum) dwarf -Shrubland Alliance.

MA (old name): SANDPLAIN HEATHLAND.

ME: Part of sandplain grassland community.

NH: Within Pitch pine/ scrub oak barrens community.

VT: Dwarf shrub, if applicable.

NY: Maritime heathland and some of Successional blueberry heath.

CT: Includes: Hudsonia tomentosa dwarf- Shrubland; Arctostaphylos uva-ursi- Vaccinium angustifolia dwarf- Shrublands.

RI: maybe part of Maritime Shrubland or related to Inland Dune/Sandbar ren and opening in Pitch Pine / Scrub Oak Barrens.

Weatherbee: Not applicable.

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